United Nations A/C.1/60/PV.1

General Assembly

Sixtieth session

Official Records

First Committee

1st meeting

Thursday, 29 September 2005, 10 a.m.

New York

Chairman: Mr. Choi Young-jin ..... (Republic of Korea)

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Statement by the Chairman

The Chairman: Allow me to extend my warm welcome to all delegations. I look forward to working with them in a cooperative and productive atmosphere during the weeks ahead. It is certainly an honour and a privilege for my country and for me to have been elected as the Chairperson of this body. I deeply appreciate the confidence the Committee has placed in me. With its full support, I hope to guide the work of the Committee to a successful conclusion, approximately five weeks from now. I will depend heavily upon the Committee's spirit of cooperation and flexibility.

I will also rely a great deal upon my colleagues in the Bureau, who were elected in early June. We have elected two Vice-Chairpersons, namely, Mr. Detlev Wolter of Germany and Mr. Lofti Bouchaara of Morocco. We have also elected the Committee's Rapporteur, Ms. Elvina Jusufaj of Albania. I am certain that their collective wisdom and expertise in disarmament issues will be a major asset for me in guiding the work of the Committee.

Furthermore, I am confident that the Committee will also be receiving full support from the Department for Disarmament Affairs and the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, headed by Mr. Nobuyasu Abe and Mr. Chen Jian, respectively.

Last but not least, the Committee will benefit greatly from the skill of Ms. Cheryl Stoute, Secretary of the First Committee, and from her experienced colleagues of the Committee's secretariat.

Election of an officer

The Chairman: I would now like to proceed with the election of the third Vice-Chairperson of the First Committee.

It is my pleasure to put before the Committee the nomination of Mrs. Gabriela Martinic of Argentina for the post of the Vice-Chairperson from the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States.

Unless I hear any objection, I shall take it that the Committee wishes to elect by acclamation Mrs. Gabriela Martinic as our third Vice-Chairperson.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: Allow me, on behalf of the Committee, to express my sincere congratulations to Mrs. Martinic on her election as a Vice-Chairperson of the First Committee. I am certain that her political acumen and diplomatic skills will contribute greatly to the work of the Committee.

Organization of work

The Chairman: In considering the Committee's work for this session, I wish first to draw the Committee's attention to document A/C.1/60/1, which contains a letter dated 21 September 2005 addressed to

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me by the President of the General Assembly and informing me that, at its 17th plenary meeting, the Assembly decided to allocate 21 disarmament and related international security agenda items to the First Committee for its consideration.

Before I give a more detailed account of the programme of work and timetable contained in A/C.1/60/CRP.1, I would like to remind the Committee that that document is based upon the tentative programme of work and timetable that was adopted by the Committee on 5 November 2004 as part of the efforts to revitalize the work of the General Assembly. The programme of work and the timetable itself were prepared in keeping with previous practice and taking into account a number of initiatives proposed over the past several years, including General Assembly decision 52/416 B, on the rationalization of the work of the First Committee. In that connection, I also took into account paragraph 36 of the annex to resolution 51/241, which reads as follows:

> "The First Committee and the Fourth Committee shall not meet simultaneously and may consider meeting in a sequential manner during the regular session of the General Assembly."

However, members may have noted from document A/C.1/60/CRP.1 that during the first two days of the Committee's substantive session, on 3 and 4 October, both morning and afternoon sessions have been allocated to the general debate. That is in line with the agreement reached last year by my predecessor and his counterpart in the Fourth Committee.

I would also like to inform the Committee that there has been a slight technical change made to document A/C.1/60/CRP.1, which members have before them. Members may recall that in the tentative timetable adopted on 5 November 2004, all of the meetings during the fourth week of the Committee's work, from 24 to 28 October, were originally scheduled for the morning hours. That has been changed to afternoon meetings for the whole of the fourth week, in view of the equitable and sequential allocation of time between the First and Fourth Committees.

In accordance with established practice, the First Committee will commence its substantive work next Monday, 3 October 2005. Members will recall that, also under Assembly decision 52/416 B, it was agreed that the Committee should make every effort to conduct and conclude its substantive work with the most efficient use of time and resources, in no less than 30 meetings and in a time frame not exceeding five weeks. Consequently, I shall make every effort to conclude the work of the Committee as recommended by the General Assembly. I therefore strongly appeal for the full cooperation of all delegations in this matter.

The First Committee's substantive session will be held from 3 October to 1 November 2005. The Committee will have a maximum of only 24 meetings to consider the agenda items allocated to it by the General Assembly.

I need not remind the Committee that this year it also has to set aside time to consider the agenda item on the question of Antarctica, after it concludes its consideration of all disarmament and international-security-related agenda items. Moreover, the Committee will also have to consider, and take action on, its tentative programme of work for the next session, in accordance with agenda item 116, which concerns the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly.

I would like to recall that during the previous session the First Committee had at its disposal a total of 26 meetings, of which it utilized 23. Consequently, I believe that if we continue to make a concerted effort to use our resources in a productive and efficient manner, we can again accomplish our tasks without any major difficulties, even with the additional agenda items.

As we have done in previous sessions, we will consider the items allocated to the First Committee in three phases, as currently reflected in the proposed programme of work and timetable.

The first phase — general debate on all items allocated to the Committee — will last one week, from 3 to 7 October, for a total of seven meetings. The rolling list of speakers for that phase is currently open, and I am aware that quite a number of delegations have already inscribed their names on the list. I invite others to do the same as soon as possible. It is my intention to close the list of speakers for the general debate on 4 October at 6 p.m. I would also like to remind delegations as they inscribe their names on the list of speakers that the rolling list would mean that they should be prepared to intervene possibly even sooner than they had originally planned. In order to efficiently use the resources allocated to us, I kindly request

delegations to limit their statements to 7 to 10 minutes, for those speaking in their national capacity, and to 10 to 15 minutes for those speaking on behalf of several delegations. In that connection, it is my intention to introduce the use of "traffic lights" for the first phase of our work, namely, the general debate.

The next phase of the Committee's work will be the thematic discussion of agenda items, as well as the introduction and consideration of all draft resolutions and decisions that will be submitted under all disarmament and related international security agenda items. That phase will cover the period from 10 to 21 October. A total of 10 meetings have been allocated for that purpose.

As members will note from document A/C.1/60/CRP.1, it is during the second phase that I plan to allocate two meetings for an exchange with the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs and other United Nations officials and for the follow-up of resolutions and decisions adopted by the Committee at its past session, including the presentation of reports. Like last year, those events will take place in an informal mode. As for the remaining meeting allocated for the second phase of the Committee's work, I propose to reserve that meeting. If necessary, it will be used for a panel discussion with independent experts. In the course of next week, the Committee will be provided the exact timing and detail for those informal segments.

I also wish to inform members of the Committee that, in order to have a structured thematic discussion and to fully utilize conference facilities, I will prepare an indicative timetable based on the Committee's established practice for the second phase of its work. The indicative paper will be made available to all delegations in due course.

In order to facilitate the Committee's work and to provide sufficient time to delegations for consultations, as well as to give enough time to the Secretariat to process draft resolutions in all official languages, the deadline for the submission of draft resolutions and decisions will be 12 October, at 6 p.m. I intend to maintain that deadline, and I therefore appeal to all delegations to respect it.

I would also encourage members to submit their draft resolutions and decisions as early as possible, in order to enable delegations to seek the necessary instructions from their capitals and to carry out sufficient consultations on them, so as to ensure that the texts finally adopted reflect the greatest possible degree of agreement. The early submission of draft resolutions and decisions will also offer all delegations the opportunity to comment on them during the second phase of our work.

In addition, it is imperative that delegations submit those draft resolutions that could entail programme budget implications as early as possible, to give the Secretariat sufficient time to prepare the necessary programme budget implications. I will also allow the Committee to take action on them before the mandatory deadline required for their submission to the Fifth Committee. In that connection, I would like to remind delegations that the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Fifth Committee need adequate time to review the programme budget implications of draft resolutions before the latter can be acted upon by the Assembly.

Finally, the last phase of the Committee's work — action on all draft resolutions and decisions — will take place from Monday, 24 October, to Tuesday, 1 November. A total of seven meetings have been set aside for that purpose. Last year the Committee concluded that final phase by taking action on 52 draft resolutions and 3 decisions during eight meetings.

As I have already mentioned, this year we also need to consider the triennial agenda item on the question of Antarctica, as well as the item on the revitalization on the work of the General Assembly. Consequently, I urge all delegations to taken note of that fact. I request their full cooperation so that we are able to take action on all draft resolutions and decisions in a timely manner, particularly on those involving budget programme implications.

It is my intention to retain the voting procedure involving the grouping of draft resolutions by clusters, using as a basis the agreed seven clusters mentioned in the letter from my predecessor to the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session pursuant to paragraph 3 of the annex to resolution 58/316, regarding further measures for the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly. I shall present the Committee with specific proposals on that matter in due course.

It is my firm belief that, based on the proposed programme of work and timetable that is now before members, the Committee will be able to efficiently

consider all the agenda items allocated to it within the available time and to conclude its work by Tuesday, 1 November 2005.

I should like to conclude my remarks on the proposed programme of work and timetable by reminding delegations of the need to maintain the requisite degree of flexibility in the process of implementing the programme and timetable. That is especially true for this year, given the fact that the Committee has been provided fewer meetings while having been allocated additional tasks.

Unless I hear any objection, I shall take it that the proposed draft programme of work and timetable contained in document A/C.1/60/CRP.1 meets with the approval of the Committee.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: I should now like to draw the Committee's attention to the relevant rules and recommendations of the General Assembly affecting the work of the Main Committees, including those contained in decision 34/401, especially the provisions dealing with explanations of vote, rights of reply and budgetary and financial questions, which I intend to apply with the cooperation and assistance of all members of the First Committee.

In order to make full use of the time and facilities allocated to the Committee, I intend — with the cooperation of the Committee — to hold meetings from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and from 3 to 6 p.m. In a related matter, during the final week of Ramadan, from 31 October to 4 November 2005, the hours of meetings in the plenary and in the Main Committees will be from 9.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. and from 2.30 to 5.30 p.m. Our last two meetings on 31 October and 1 November will therefore start at 9.30 a.m. instead of 10 a.m.

I would also like to draw the attention of the Committee to agenda item 5, entitled "Election of the officers of the Main Committees", as recommended in document A/60/250, as well as to rule 99, paragraph (a), of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, which, as amended by resolution 56/509, of 8 July 2002, reads as follows:

> "All the Main Committees shall, at least three months before the opening of the session, elect a Chairman. Elections of the other officers provided for in rule 103 shall be held at the latest by the end of the first week of the session."

In view of the foregoing, I would like to propose that the First Committee, in accordance with that resolution, consider this item some time in June 2006, some three months before the opening of the sixty-first session of the General Assembly.

If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Committee wishes to proceed accordingly.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: Concerning the submission of draft resolutions, I wish to draw the Committee's attention to paragraph 33 of document A/60/250, dated 16 September 2005, entitled "Organization of the sixtieth regular session of the General Assembly, adoption of the agenda and allocation of items". The paragraph reads as follows:

> "The General Committee noted and decided to bring to the attention of the General Assembly that the Secretary-General encourages Member States to transmit all draft resolutions and decisions in electronic form as well as on paper; and that the Secretary-General wishes to inform Member States that the submitters are responsible for ensuring that the electronic and paper versions of the draft resolutions and decisions are identical in content."

In that connection, I urge those Member States wishing to submit draft resolutions and decisions to the Committee to kindly observe the following procedure. For submission of draft resolutions that are based on pre-existing resolutions, the officially issued version must be used as the base text, with all new text and changes to the old text indicated clearly in boldface. Similarly, for revised draft resolutions, the original draft resolution issued on the Official Document System must be used as the base text, with all revisions indicated clearly in boldface.

Delegations are requested to follow the procedures and to submit both the hardcopy of the final text and a diskette to the secretariat for processing the document. Those delegations wishing to submit a draft resolution or decision are encouraged to contact the secretariat of the Committee for further information and assistance. Additionally, in order to facilitate the process, the Committee secretariat will provide pre-existing resolutions for delegations in the form of a kit, both in hardcopy and in electronic form, and it has

expressed its readiness to assist delegations in that respect.

At this stage, I shall give the floor to the Secretary of the First Committee to inform the Committee of certain matters pertaining to the proceedings of the Committee.

Ms. Stoute (Secretary of the Committee): As the Chairman has already said, I wish to assure all delegations once again that the secretariat stands ready to assist them fully in the submission of their draft resolutions. To facilitate their work, we will continue, as we have in the past, to provide kits containing hardcopies of last year's, or other previous years', resolutions as adopted by the General Assembly, as well as a diskette with an electronic file containing the same resolutions in the First Committee draft resolution format. I ask members to please use that format when they submit their draft resolutions and to indicate any changes or new text in the electronic file. The secretariat will allocate symbols to all draft resolutions and decisions in the order in which they are received.

I would also kindly ask delegations to use electronic mail for the submission of draft resolutions and other communications to the secretariat, if possible. My colleague, Ms. Christa Giles, will provide delegations with her e-mail address to facilitate transmission. But, for ease of reference, I think I shall give it to members now. It is giles@un.org. She is the focal point for receiving all draft resolutions and decisions. The secretariat will be distributing the kits in due course. Delegates may inquire at the desk, and they will receive the kits that pertain to their draft resolution.

With regard to documentation, A/C.1/60/1, entitled "Allocation of agenda items to the First Committee", has been issued. Document A/C.1/60/INF/1, entitled "Documents of the First Committee", will be issued on Monday, 3 October. Document A/C.1/60/3, containing the list of delegations — which I know is important to all members — will be issued on the following Monday, 10 October. If members have not yet done so, I ask that they please not forget to submit their lists of names to the secretariat by Monday, 3 October, just to ensure that their delegations are included in the first issue.

The Chairman: I now give the floor to the representative of Cuba.

Mr. Gala López (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, allow me to say how happy we are to see you, Mr. Chairman, presiding over the work of the First Committee. Through you, I would also like to congratulate the members of the Bureau on their elections.

I simply wanted to ask a question with regard to the time that will be allowed for delegations to make their national interventions during the general debate. It is our understanding — and we believe this is reflected in the document regarding the work plan and timetable — that we will have a maximum of 10 minutes for national interventions. Is that the understanding of the Chairman as well?

The Chairman: Yes, the representative of Cuba is correct. Delegations will have 10 minutes to make their statements.

Are there any further questions or comments?

I call on the Secretary of the Committee.

Ms. Stoute (Secretary of the Committee): The members of the Rio Group have been asked to remain in this room after the meeting.

The Chairman: If no delegation wishes to make further comments at this stage, I shall now adjourn the meeting.

As decided, the Committee will begin its substantive work next Monday, 3 October, at 10 a.m. sharp in Conference Room 4.

The meeting rose at 3.35 p.m.